

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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44

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 EB-11 AGR-20 OMB-01 CIEP-03 DRC-01 /130 W

----- 045288

P R 271429Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY MASERU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4391

INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L MASERU 1129

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E O 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT LT

SUBJ: MINISTER PEETE PEETE FORCED TO RESIGN

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. PRIME MINISTER LEABUA JONATHAN'S OFFICE ANNOUNCED SEP 27 THAT MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE PEETE PEETE HAD TENDERED HIS RESIGNATION AT REQUEST OF PRIME MINISTER. REASON FOR ACTION WAS INSULTING REFERENCE TO CATHOLIC ARCHBISHOP MORAPOLI IN INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (INA) ON SEP 25. ON SEP 26 PRIME MINISTER TOLD INA THAT PEETE'S REMARKS WERE PERSONAL AND DID NOT REPRESENT GOVERNMENT'S VIEW. HE CHARACTERIZED PEETE'S REMARKS AS UNPLEASANT AND SAID HE WAS CONSIDERING WHAT ACTION TO TAKE. END UNCLASSIFIED.

BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL

2. PEETE PEETE HAS AT TIMES BEEN AN EMBARRASSMENT TO JONATHAN, EITHER BY TAKING POSITIONS WITH WHICH JONATHAN DID NOT AGREE OR THROUGH ILL-CONSIDERED REMARKS. ALONG WITH DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER MASERIBANE, PEETE MOST POLITICALLY POWERFUL AMONG JONATHAN'S MINISTERS. PEETE HAS

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TICALLY POWERFUL AMONG JONATHAN'S MINISTERS. PEETE HAS

HELD SEVERAL MINISTERIAL POSITIONS, INCLUDING COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AND HAS LONG BEEN REGARDED AS BEING HIGHLY AMBITIOUS TO BECOME PRIME MINISTER. IT IS UNLIKELY THAT HIS CURRENT MISFORTUNE WILL END HIS POLITICAL CAREER.

3. WE ARE NOT QUITE CLEAR ON NATURE OF PEETE'S INSULT (HE IS SAID TO HAVE CALLED ARCHBISHOP MORAPELI A "RAG") NOR WHAT PROMPTED IT. JONATHAN'S PUNISHMENT HAD APPEARED ABRUPT AND HARSH IN MEETING SITUATION THAT COULD PROBABLY HAVE BEEN SATISFIED WITH AN APOLOGY. WE ARE THEREFORE INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT JONATHAN TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO REMOVE A RIVAL FROM PROMINENCE.

4. NO PUBLIC REACTION YET AVAILABLE NOR IS THERE ANY INDICATION PEETE INTENDS TO RETALIATE. JONATHAN WOULD PROBABLY NOT HAVE ACTED WITHOUT CONSULTING OTHER MINISTERS, PARTICULARLY MASERIBANE. MOREOVER, JONATHAN'S RISK IN FIRING PEETE MINIMIZED AS MOVE WILL HAVE SUPPORT OF CATHOLIC CHURCH. END CONFIDENTIAL.
HAUGHT

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NNN

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